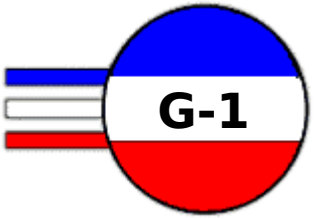
G-1

2005 FORSCOM Army Family Action Plan Conference

Report Out

29 April 2005

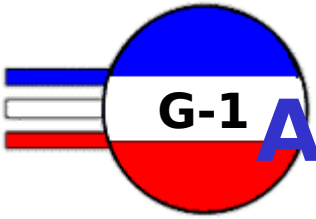


EMPLOYMENT
Melissa Goetz: Fort Drum

Awareness of Contractors for Employment Opportunities

SCOPE:

There is limited awareness of the available resources that provide a listing of contractors for individuals seeking employment. Although websites exist that list contractors; they are not generally marketed to the military community (for example: Central Contract Registration, U.S. Army Contracting Agency, and Military Spouse Career Center). Finding employment is an ongoing concern and knowledge of this information will provide another resource for the military community.



Awareness of Contractors for Employment Opportunities

RECOMMENDATION:

Develop a marketing strategy that promotes awareness of contractors currently doing business within a region.

Tax Exemption for DoD Civilian Disability Retirement

SCOPE:

Department of Defense (DoD) civilian disability retirement pay is fully taxable under current Federal taxation laws. Taxation decreases disabled retirees' limited income. Civilian employees and veterans are members of the DoD team and a precedence already exists for veterans regarding the non-taxation of their disability retirement. Unexpected disability retirement is already a financial hardship and federal taxation further impacts these circumstances.

Tax Exemption for DoD Civilian Disability Retirement

RECOMMENDATION:

Amend the Federal tax law to exempt DoD civilian disability retirement.

Military Spouse Preference (MSP) Across All Federal Agencies

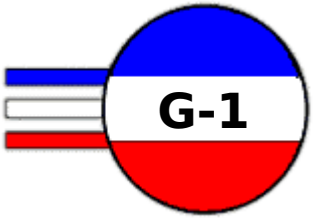
SCOPE:

Non-Department of Defense (DoD) federal agencies do not utilize MSP in their hiring practices. It is becoming more difficult for military spouses to find civil service positions due to the downsizing of federal positions within DoD. Spouses in remote areas where there are limited DoD agencies have additional employment challenges. Employment within the Federal service system enables military spouses to maintain the benefits of a career regardless of frequent permanent change of station moves.

Military Spouse Preference (MSP) Across All Federal Agencies

RECOMMENDATION:

Amend Title 5, United States Code to require all federal agencies to utilize MSP.



ENTITLEMENTS
Sarah Rice: Fort Polk

Housing Allowance Disparity for Initial Entry Training Soldiers

SCOPE:

There is a disparity in the housing allowance received by Initial Entry Training (IET) Soldiers for dependents left behind in U.S. Territories and those IET soldiers entering from the fifty states. This causes a hardship because the cost of living expenses in the U.S. Territories Home of Record (HOR) often exceed those at the training station in the United States. The IET Soldiers with dependents entering Active Duty (AD) from US Territories receive a housing allowance based on the training location they report to, not their HOR or Place Entered Active Duty (PLEAD). The IET Soldiers with dependents entering AD within the US receive a housing allowance based on their HOR or PLEAD. In order to be fair and equitable, the criteria that determine the level of entitlements should be the same for every IET soldier with dependents.

Housing Allowance Disparity for Initial Entry Training Soldiers

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Change Joint Federal Travel Regulation (JFTR) to allow Overseas Housing Allowance for Soldiers entering AD from US Territories if their dependents are still located in the area where the Soldier entered active duty.
2. Amend DOD Financial Management Regulation to allow IET Soldiers entering AD from US Territories to receive the table rate Basic Allowance for Housing for the IET HOR and PLEAD and not the training site rate.

Dependent Travel on Space Available

SCOPE:

Dependent Space Available travel policy is limited. Travel is restricted from CONUS to OCONUS and from OCONUS to CONUS unless command sponsored. Space Available travel is not offered to dependents within CONUS unless accompanied by the service member. There is no provision for dependent Space Available travel during Temporary Change of Station (TCS) overseas tours or for Space Available travel for dependents of deceased service members at any time. A change in this policy will allow all dependents to travel without the sponsor and decrease family separation time caused by current deployment cycles.

Dependent Travel on Space Available

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Authorize all dependents to fly Space Available without sponsor to include all PCS/TCS tours.
2. Expand policy to include surviving dependents of deceased service members.

I.D. Card Retention for Former Spouses of Early Retirees

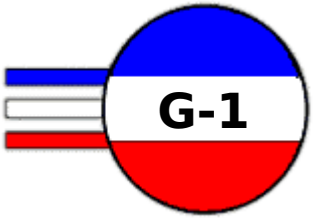
SCOPE:

Current policy does not allow spouses to retain their I.D. cards if a member is offered an early retirement with 18/19 years of service and the 20 year marriage dissolves after retirement. Spouses caught in the early retirement dilemma supported the service member's career, relocated their households on numerous occasions, and put their own career on hold as a military spouse. The spouse should retain authorized retirement benefits, the same as the service member.

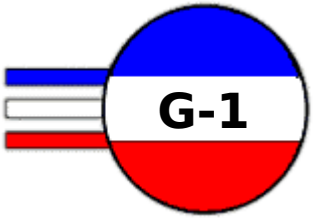
I.D. Card Retention for Former Spouses of Early Retirees

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Amend the Uniformed Services Former Spouses' Protection Act to allow full retention of I.D. cards and privileges for divorcees of service members who retire early and otherwise meet the 20/20/20 requirements.
2. Establish an effective date for benefits, retroactive to the time early retirement was first offered.
3. Include a briefing of the Act in the retirement briefing for service members and spouses.



FAMILY SUPPORT
Greg Julian: Fort McPherson



Designated Family Readiness Group Funds

SCOPE:

AR 600-20 does not specifically authorize funds for Family Readiness Group (FRG) officially sanctioned functions. The increased OPTEMPO and sustained deployments create more demands on the FRG, however financial support is not available or is inconsistent from unit to unit. This causes the FRG to become a fundraising organization, rather than allowing them to focus on the Family Readiness mission.

Designated Family Readiness Group Funds

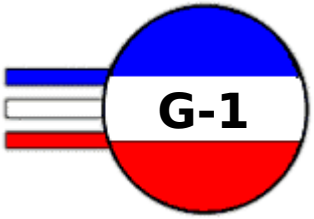
RECOMMENDATION:

Amend AR 600-20 to specifically authorize and designate money to be used for Family Readiness Group officially sanctioned functions.

Family Care Plan for All Soldiers with Dependents

SCOPE:

AR 600-20 does not require all Soldiers with dependents to complete a Family Care Plan. When the family member becomes incapacitated and there are no written provisions in place, the unit does not know who to contact for their care or the care of their dependent children. The lack of a Family Care Plan places great strains on the Rear Detachment Commander, Family Readiness Group, and other unit members. Requiring all Soldiers with dependents to complete a Family Care Plan will prevent other legal actions and children becoming wards of the state.



Family Care Plan for All Soldiers with Dependents

RECOMMENDATION:

Amend AR 600-20 to require all Soldiers with dependent family members to complete a Family Care Plan.

Continuing Education for Surviving Children Enrolled in DoDEA

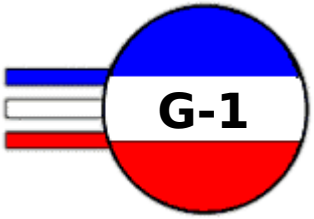
SCOPE:

Children enrolled in the installation's Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools whose sponsor is killed in the line of duty do not have the guarantee of continuing education in that system beyond the current school year. Remaining in a familiar school system is less disruptive to the student. In addition, loss of children's education benefits is not consistent with survivor benefits. Allowing the family to decide when to discontinue on-post education provides more stability at a critical time.

Continuing Education for Surviving Children Enrolled in DoDEA

RECOMMENDATION:

Amend DODI Number 1342.26 to authorize surviving children to remain enrolled in the installation's education system beyond the school year.



FORCE SUPPORT
Ali Masson: Fort Lewis

Wounded Soldier Updates

SCOPE:

Family members of wounded Soldiers have difficulty obtaining accurate follow-up information about their Soldier in a sensitive and timely manner. After the initial contact, family members are directed to use the Casualty Area Command resources which are overwhelmed by spikes in demand. This is evidenced by the flooded casualty assistance hotline and the operators' inability to provide current information. Family members deserve personal access to someone with more accurate and complete information regarding their Soldier's condition.

Wounded Soldier Updates

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Require current contact policy to remain in effect but be conducted at Installation level by the Casualty Assistance Office.
2. Assign a Casualty Assistance Officer to family members of all wounded Soldiers who are classified as seriously injured or higher to meet their needs through personal contact.

Barracks Living Conditions

SCOPE:

Soldiers are forced to live in barracks that are not meeting basic living needs and standards. Up to this point, Installation Operation and Maintenance Army (OMA) account funding has been insufficient to provide necessary resources to maintain an acceptable level of repair, preventive maintenance, and self-help materials for barracks. Recently, barracks funding goals were increased to 90% of requirements to address this problem; however, funds are not yet committed. It is critical these resources are committed and tracked closely to guarantee funds are used as intended, maintenance needs are genuinely met, and adequate barracks maintenance and repair funding is provided for in the future. These improvements help achieve the Army's "quality-of-life" goals in support of Soldier well-being.

Barracks Living Conditions

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Commit and maintain 90% Sustainment, Restoration and Modernization (SRM) requirements for maintenance and renovations.
2. Develop and implement a permanent Department of the Army policy to ensure continued allocation, specific to barracks maintenance, in order to maintain sanitary health and safety conditions.
3. Hold commanders accountable for meeting barracks living condition standards.

Senior Noncommissioned Officer Retention Control Points

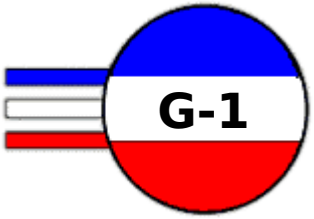
SCOPE:

The present Retention Control Point (RCP) program is forcing a loss of experienced Senior Noncommissioned Officers (NCO) who are willing to serve beyond the cap. In FY 04, an estimated 800 Senior NCOs separated from the Army due to reaching their RCP. There is value in retaining these experienced E7s and E8s, whose expertise is indispensable to unit readiness. Changing the existing policy preserves the training investment in Senior NCOs and prevents institutional deterioration.

Senior Noncommissioned Officer Retention Control Points

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Extend the current RCP for Senior NCOs an additional 2 years.
2. Establish an RCP review board to select those best qualified for extension.



MEDICAL/DENTAL
Gizzy Gray: Fort Riley

TRICARE Referral Process for Specialty Care Appointments

SCOPE:

The process for authorizing specialty care appointments in TRICARE is complex and time consuming. Currently, the referral for specialty care appointments is processed from the Military Treatment Facility (MTF) to the TRICARE Service Center and back to the MTF. Beneficiaries are unaware of the process. Coordination with a regional service center, rather than a referral being managed at the local level, hinders the beneficiaries timely access to specialty care.

TRICARE Referral Process for Specialty Care Appointments

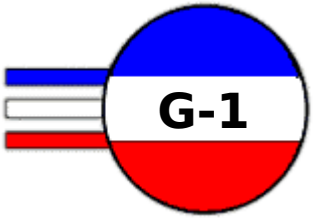
RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Create a referral process that manages scheduling of specialty care appointments at the local level.
2. Create a more manageable TRICARE referral and authorization system that is publicized for all beneficiaries.
3. Create a publicity plan to increase awareness of the process.

Soldier Category II Dental Needs

SCOPE:

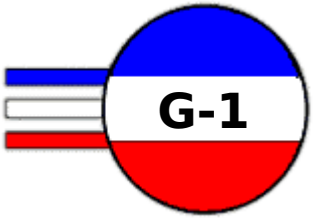
Soldiers designated as non-emergency (Category II) are not receiving treatment due to a shortage of dentists and ancillary personnel. The current OPTEMPO and subsequent activation of the U.S. Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers have exacerbated the problem. Soldiers' needs are being indeterminately delayed to accommodate those who are higher priority (Category III and IV). Provision of Category II dental care is critical in preventing Category III situation, and in supporting the overall health of the Soldier.



Soldier Category II Dental Needs

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Increase the authorized number of military dentists and ancillary care providers.
2. Increase funding for FEDS_HEAL program for Reserve component.



Maximum Allowable Benefit for Orthodontic Treatment

SCOPE:

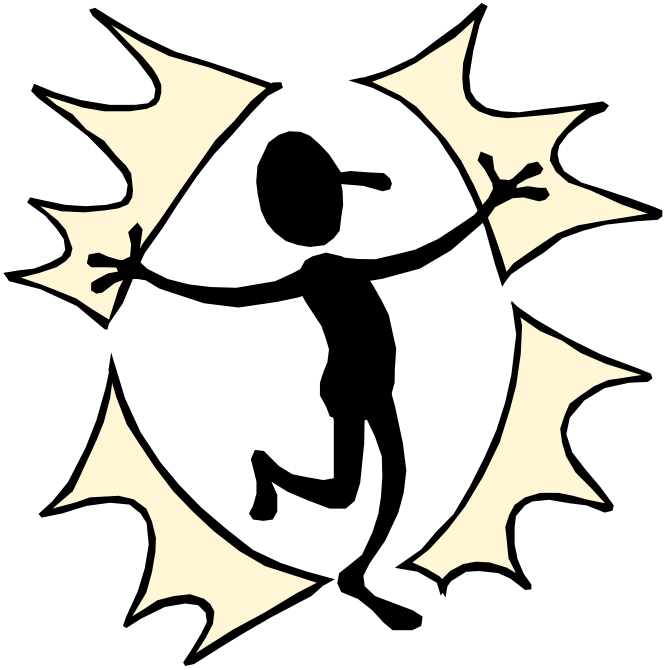
The orthodontic treatment cap has not kept pace with increases in the cost of treatment. The current $1,500 cap, which covers approximately 30% of the total cost, was established in 2001. Soldiers and family members may forego treatment or incur substantial expense because of prohibitive costs.

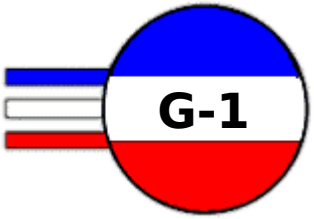
Maximum Allowable Benefit for Orthodontic Treatment

RECOMMENDATION:

Increase the maximum allowable cap from $1,500 to $2,000.

BREAK





Four Most Valuable Services

1. **Medical/Dental (including TRICARE)**
2. **Army Community Service (ACS)**
3. **Morale, Welfare & Recreation (MWR)**
4. **Commissary**

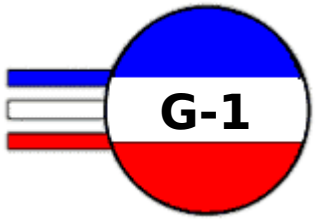
Top Six Critical Active Issues

1. **Issue # 497: Distribution of MGIB Benefits to Dependents (#1 last year)**
2. **Issue # 524: Military Spouse Employment Compensation**
3. **Issue # 560: Veterans Group Life Insurance Premiums**
4. **Issue # 577: Non-chargeable Leave for Deployed Soldiers**
5. **Issue # 538: Death Benefits for Stillborn Infants**
6. **Issue # 551: Mortgage Relief for Mobilized Reserve Components Service Members**

Conference Top Five Issues

1. Barracks Living Conditions
2. TRICARE Referral Process for Specialty Care Appointments
3. Designated Family Readiness Group Funds
4. Wounded Soldier Updates
5. Housing Allowance Disparity for IET Soldiers

FREEDOM'S
GUARDIAN



AFAP
The Way Ahead

- **After-Action/Outbrief Slides posted to FORSCOM AFAP website NLT 3 May 05 for**
  - **Senior Mission Commanders**
  - **Installation AFAP managers**
- **Issues to DA on 1 August 2004**
- **DA AFAP/GOSC 14-18 November 2005**
- **Local Installation AFAP conferences 1st quarter 2006**

AFAP
Delegation Team Homework

- **Brief Mission and Installation Chains of Command**
- **Communicate with the Army Family Community**
  - **Town Hall Meetings**
  - **Post Newspaper Articles**
  - **MWR Publications**
  - **Flyers**
  - **Family Readiness Groups**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HARD WORK TRAVEL SAFELY!